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Inspired by the African fairy tale, *"The Friendship of the Tortoise and the Eagle"*

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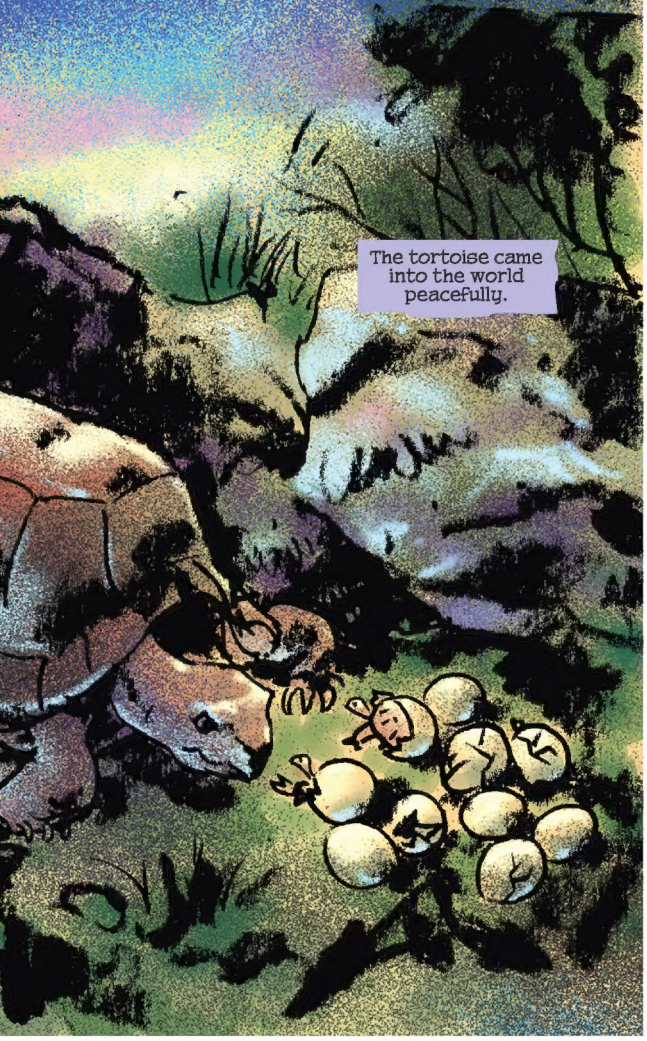
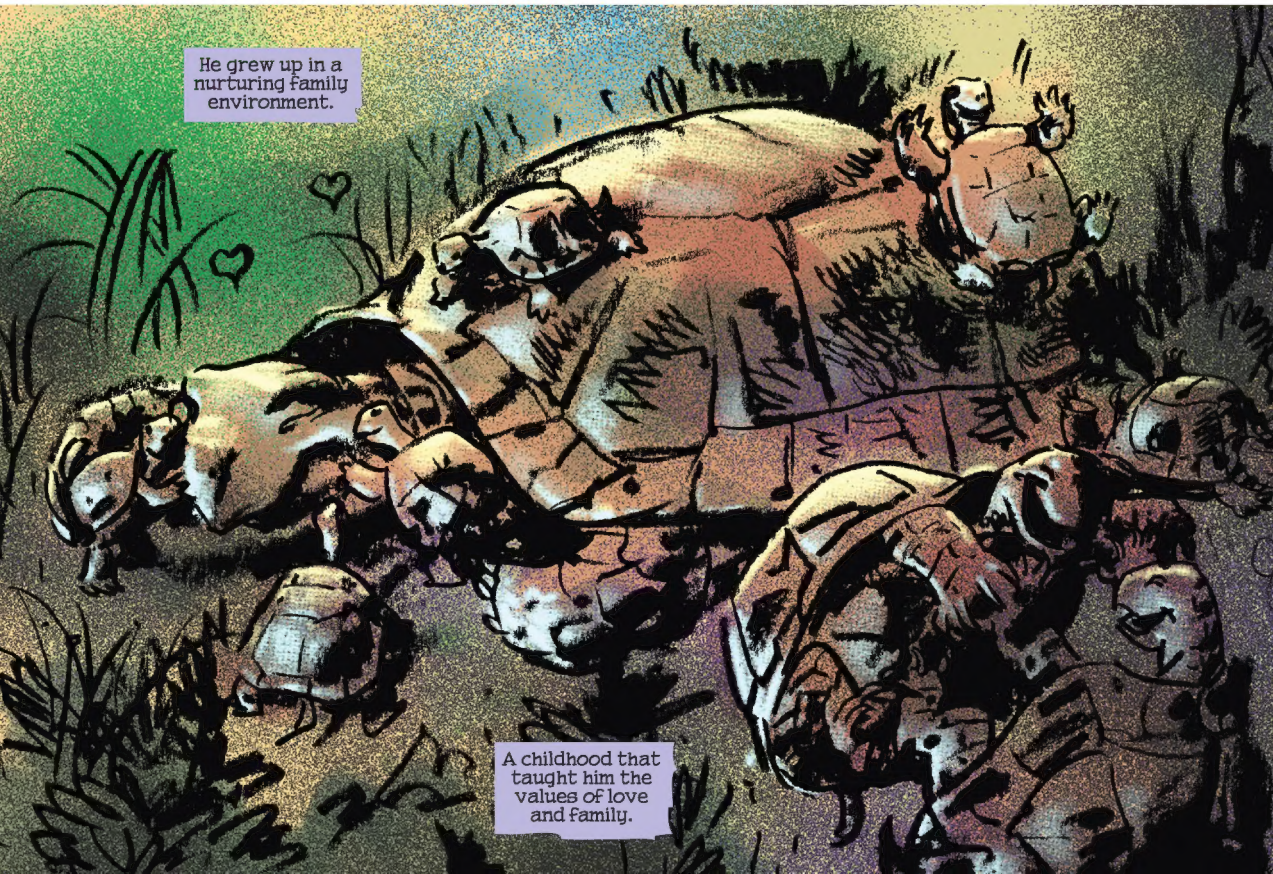
What is friendship?
Some say it is a bond shared between two beings; mutual trust that each must contribute to equally.
But what happens if two friends stop being equals? What if one breaks the other's trust, severing the bond between them?
Such was the friendship of the tortoise and the eagle...

Their upbringing could not have been more different.

The eagle chick witnessed his family's slaughter.

He learned the brutal reality of hatred.


The tortoise came into the world peacefully.


He grew up in a nurturing family environment.
A childhood that taught him the values of love and family.

However, the tortoise's life was not all fun and games.
As he grew older, the odd pattern on his shell set him apart.

Stay away from him. X marks the spot! He's nothing but a big target!

He was different, and soon his company was not welcomed among the other tortoises.

The tortoise found himself spending much of his time alone.

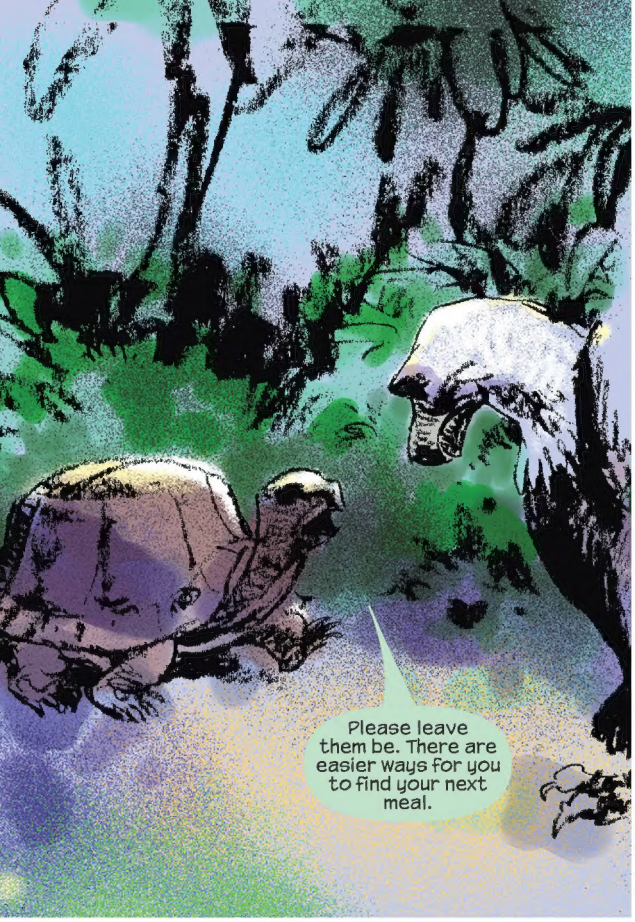
Unsurprisingly, the eagle's early years were anything but idyllic.

With no one to turn to, he taught *himself* to fly.

And soon after spreading his wings, the eagle was quick to learn the skill of the hunt.

It was survival of the fittest, as life had taught him. Caring not for size or stature, the eagle was fearless in choosing his prey.

When warm meat was scarce, the eagle often flew to the grasslands, where there was prey of a different sort.
That of a more hard-shelled variety.
And while he had to work a little harder for his meal, the tortoises never ran or put up much of a fight.
Until one day...
Stop!


Please leave them be. There are easier ways for you to find your next meal.

I prefer cold blood on such a hot day.
Then take me instead. I offer myself in exchange for their lives.

HAHA HAHA
What kind of fool are you, sacrificing yourself?
They were... they *are* my friends.
As you wish...

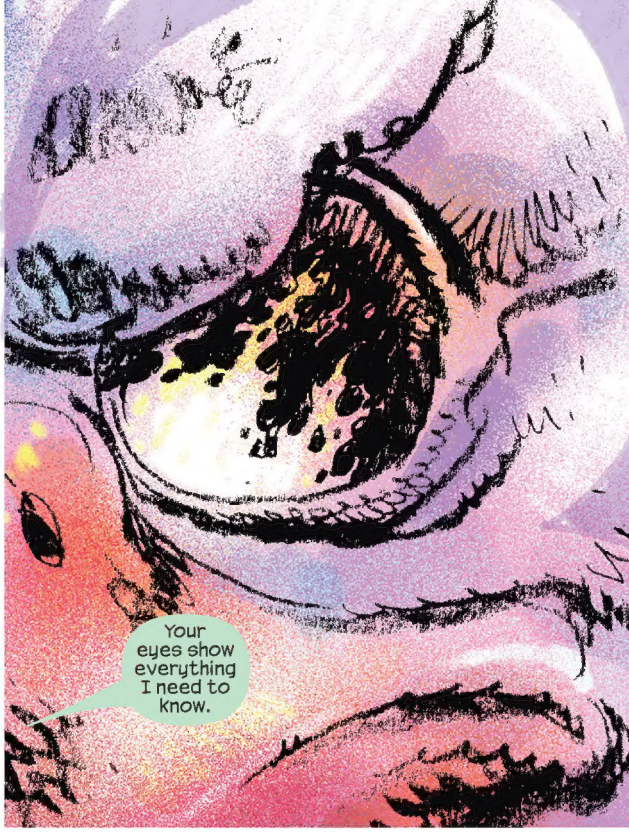
Those cowards would not have saved your life had your positions been reversed.
Possibly. But I cannot forget the friendship we once shared...
...even if they have.

Incredible. You have quite the view from up here.
You're not scared?

I might as well enjoy the scenery as it's bound to be the last thing I see.
Your outlook on life is an interesting one, tortoise.

I have a feeling that you're not going to kill me, eagle.
Really? And how can you be so sure of that?
I find I have a sense about these things. You've led a solitary and painful life, yet you still hold onto a spark of hope that you won't be alone forever.
That's why you'll spare my life.

How dare you?! You know nothing of my life!


Your eyes show everything I need to know.

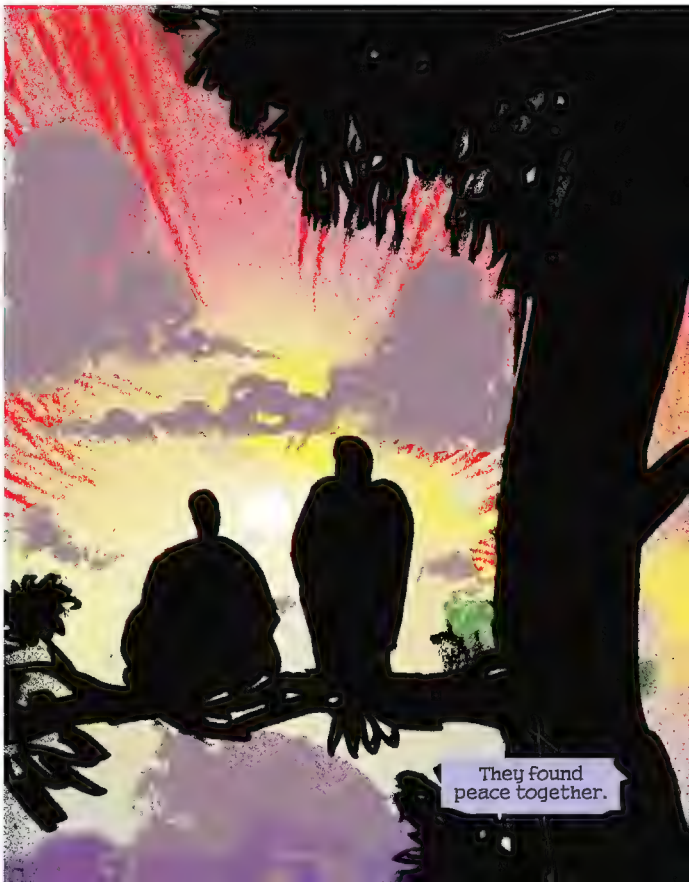
The demons I carry are mine alone.
Maybe I could help you keep them at bay.

After all I've done?
You're not the only one in need of a friend.

As the days grew to months, so did the two grow to become friends...
?

?
The tortoise was able to see the hope inside the eagle and provide him with the comfort and companionship he had long desired.

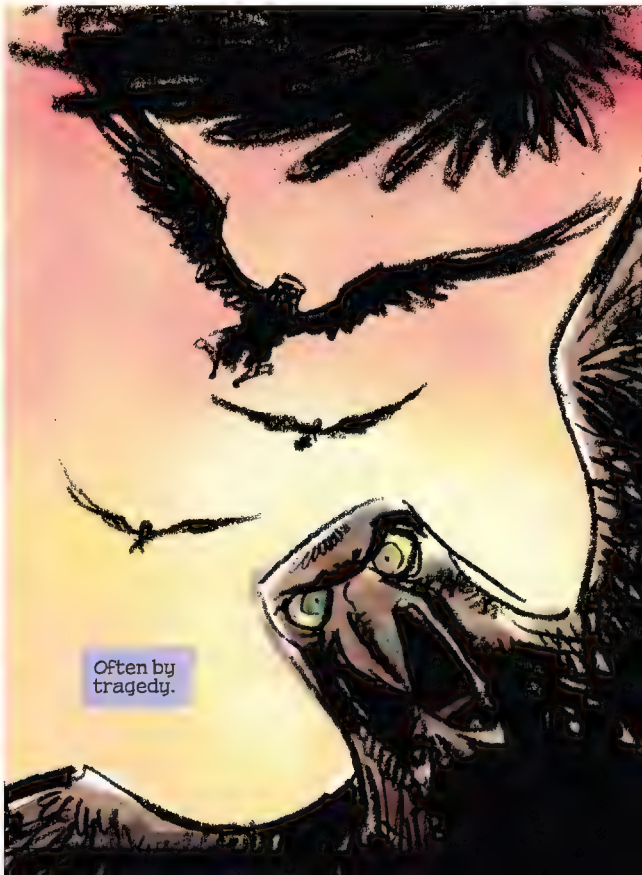
The eagle accepted the tortoise for who he was and looked past their differences, simply enjoying the fact that he finally had a friend.


They found peace together.

Demons were laid to rest.
Trust formed between them.
?

But trust is easily shattered.

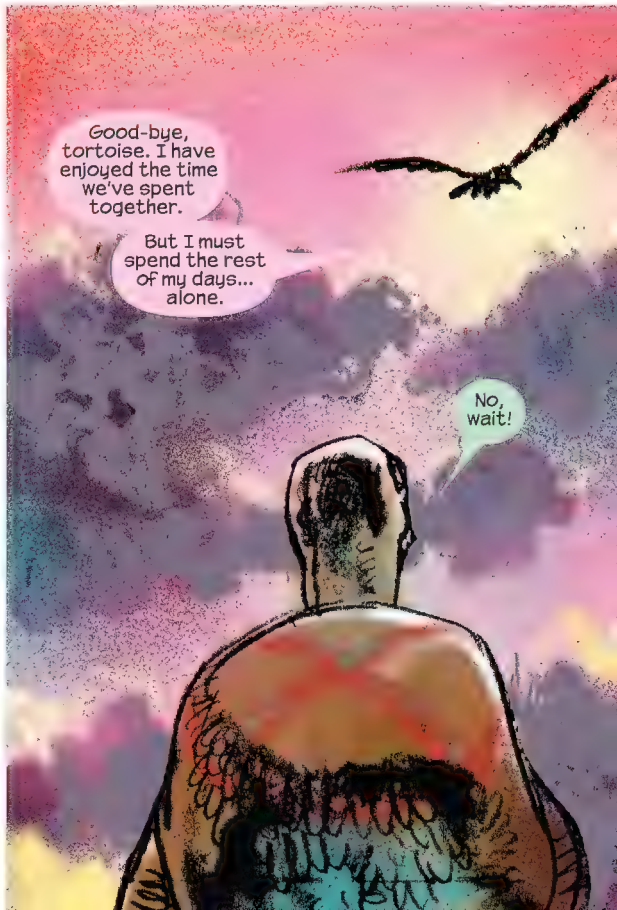
What--?
NO!

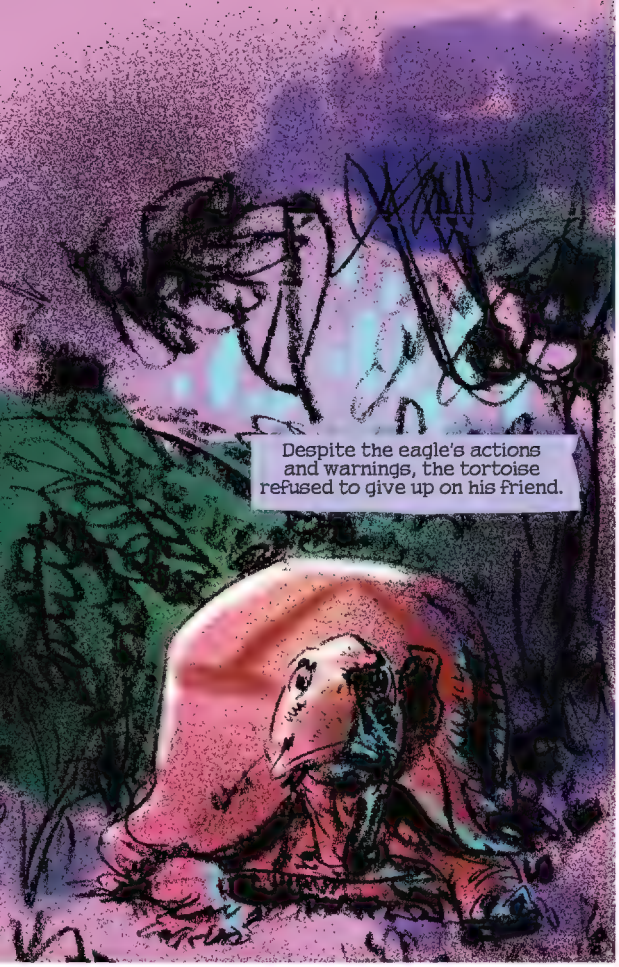

Often by tragedy.

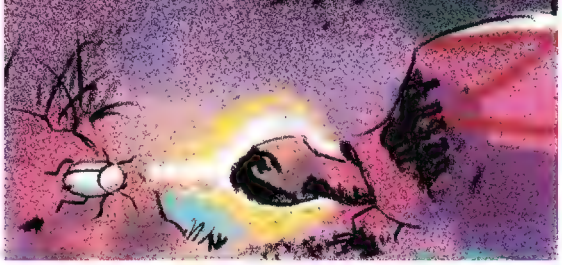
Don't...
Don't worry. It will be all right--

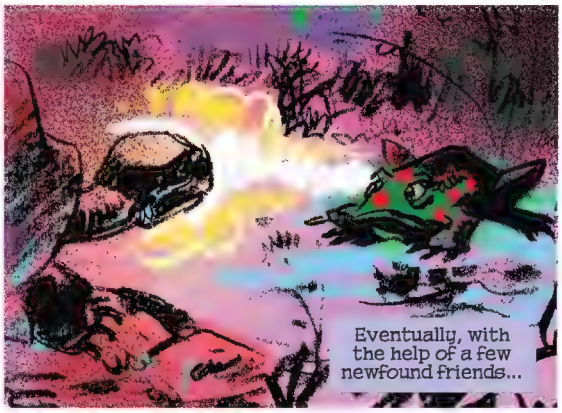
No, it won't! Do you see what I mean about demons?!
Mine will always haunt me! They'll never be laid to rest!

Don't think that way. Together we can--
No, it's not safe! I'm a danger to you...to all those around me!
Stay away!


Good-bye, tortoise. I have enjoyed the time we've spent together.
But I must spend the rest of my days... alone.
No, wait!

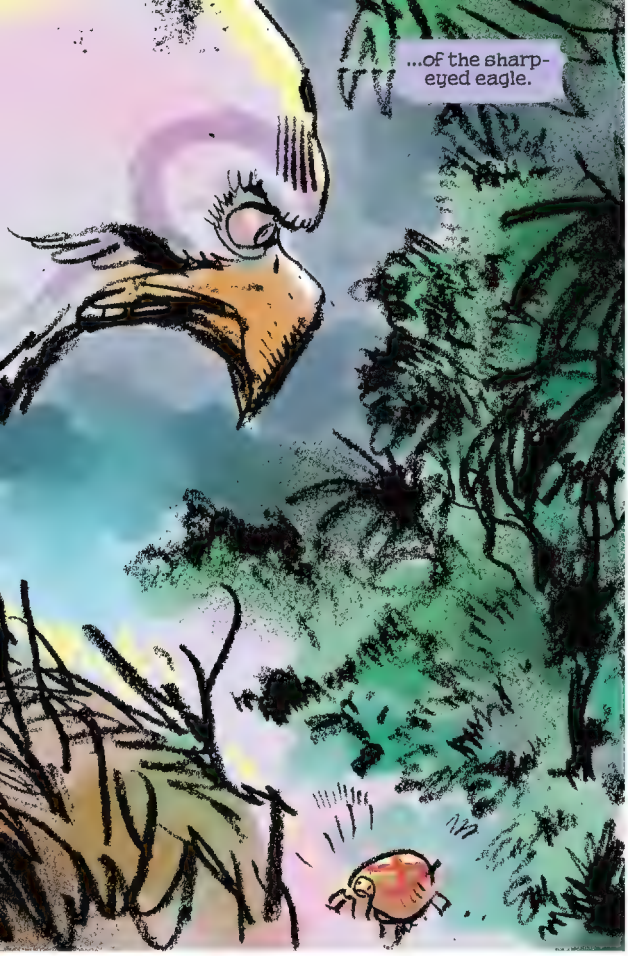

Despite the eagle's actions and warnings, the tortoise refused to give up on his friend.




Eventually, with the help of a few newfound friends...

...the tortoise was able to locate the eagle's lair.

A fact that did not escape the notice...


...of the sharp-eyed eagle.

I wish I could say it was good to see you again, old friend, but I'm disappointed you didn't respect my wishes.
Tortoises are just as hard of head as we are of shell.

The years have not been kind. There's no telling what I would do when hungry.
I don't want to hurt you.
I don't think you will.
I'm not the same eagle you once knew. Leave me be.

I didn't come all this way to turn back so quickly. I'm staying right here.
Then you place your life in peril.

The tortoise was true to his word and stayed at the base of the tree, hoping to eventually speak with the eagle.

But as days passed with no luck, the tortoise decided he had to take matters into his own "hands."

When he spied the eagle leaving his nest, he made arrangements to pay him a visit...

...hoping he would be able to talk sense into his long-lost friend.

NO!

Killing has become all I know! Now do you see the monster I am?

I warned you for your own good! But it's clear now you'll never listen!

Please, don't do this! Don't let your demons consume you once and for all!

It was only a matter of time. There's nothing you could have done. But thank you for trying.
Good-bye...

...forever this time.

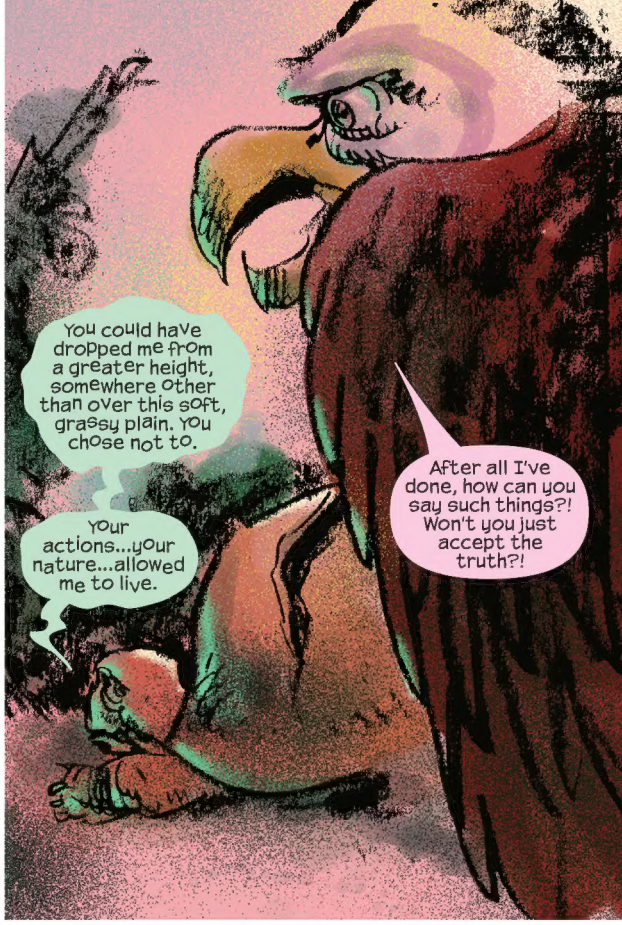
NOOOOO!

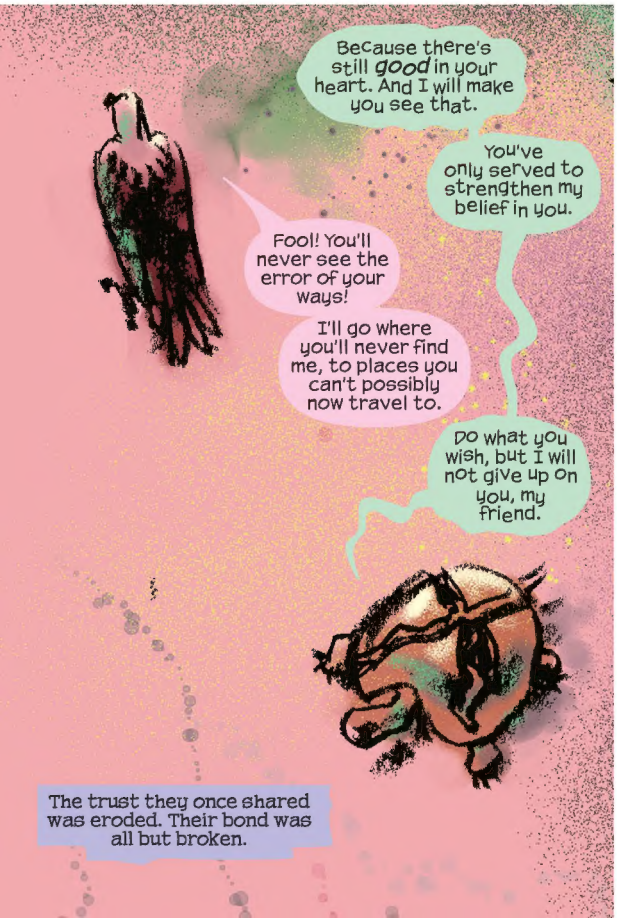
KRAK

Arrgghhh!
My legs...

You survived?!
Unbelievable...

I... live.
And I have you to thank for that.
What?!


You could have dropped me from a greater height, somewhere other than over this soft, grassy plain. You chose not to.
Your actions...your nature...allowed me to live.
After all I've done, how can you say such things?! Won't you just accept the truth?!


Because there's still *good* in your heart. And I will make you see that.
You've only served to strengthen my belief in you.
Fool! You'll never see the error of your ways!
I'll go where you'll never find me, to places you can't possibly now travel to.
Do what you wish, but I will not give up on you, my friend.
The trust they once shared was eroded. Their bond was all but broken.

But the friendship of the tortoise and the eagle would never end...
...as long as there was hope.
The End